

System Configuration Team Meeting Notes

NOAA Fisheries Offices, Portland, OR November 23, 2004

1. Greetings and Introductions.

SCT chair Bill Hevlin welcomed everyone to today's meeting, held November 23 at NOAA Fisheries' Portland offices. Hevlin led a review of today's agenda, then asked that any comments on the October SCT meeting notes be provided to him as soon as possible.

The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the items discussed and decisions made at today's meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about this summary should call Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420.

Cindy LeFleur noted that Rod Woodin's old position has now been filled at WDFW.

2. Portland and Walla Walla District FFDRWG Update.

Rock Peters said Portland District FFDRWG met on October 28. Among the topics the group discussed:

1. The Dalles biological studies – discussed preliminary results of 2004 studies, the potential vortex problem at Bay 6(the Corps is working on a vortex fix for the 2005 season) A special SRWG meeting was set for December 1 to discuss 2005 forebay and biological studies; a December 6 trip to ERDC is being discussed. The group also discussed funding needs for J-block removal – probably in the \$200,000-\$300,000 range.
2. The Dalles decision framework – a meeting was held on this topic on November 1; laid out the schedule for the completion of The Dalles decision analysis; a progress review meeting was set for December 13.
3. Bonneville 2 corner collector detection system – prototype tests are not going well; electronics appear to be working with little or no hole in coverage; plan is to redesign in 2005 and re-test in 2006.
4. Adult studies – the website is up and running; it provides information on the 1996-1997 studies.
5. Bonneville 2 trash rake – the contract for installation has been delayed until FY'06; design concerns have been identified; dredging and trash rack replacement is now complete.
6. Bonneville adult PIT – contract was awarded in September; there is a need to go to orifice flow in the ladder a few days early; will be maintaining both PIT systems until the evaluation is complete; the evaluation will include radio tracking using coho, steelhead

- and fall chinook; Washington shore will be complete in 2005, Bradford Island in 2006.
7. John Day decision document – this evaluation will be 60% complete in December, and complete in February.
 8. Bonneville survival program – USGS presented preliminary passage results; the Corps has budgeted for a one-treatment test in spring and summer.
 9. Bonneville 2 FGE program – the group discussed preliminary results; the draft Decision Document will be complete in December and finalized in January; the decision will encompass alternatives for FGE improvements or no action.

It was agreed to schedule a special SRWG meeting for Monday, December 20 to discuss any remaining study concerns or issues; at Tom Lorz's request, Peters said he will send out a list of the studies for which the Corps is requesting final proposals. The final list, as developed at the SRWG meeting, will then come to SCT for funding prioritization. With respect to the Bonneville 2 FGE decision document, Peters asked that the SCT members review this document carefully, in preparation for a substantive discussion of FGE improvements at the January 20 SCT meeting – a decision will be needed at that meeting. He added that the final SRWG meeting to review FY'05 studies will be held in late January to discuss the status of individual proposals, probably at John Day, exact meeting date TBA.

The next Portland District FFDRWG meeting was set for January 25

Marvin Shutters provided an overview of the November 3-4 Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting; the main topic of discussion was the Major System Improvement Analysis. We heard quite a bit about the models we're working with on the analysis, said Shutters. We have scheduled a January 12 meeting in Portland to discuss the tradeoff analysis that would be a part of that project – the results of modeling various configurational and operational options, and the expected biological effects of those various options, by species, together with cost and power impact estimates, he said.

The group also discussed the McNary spillway gate rehab, said Shutters; we are anticipating that all four gates will be complete by February 10. We also talked about McNary surface bypass; we're not intending to go directly to the design of an RSW, so we will be holding a workshop in February and March with the states and tribes to brainstorm on alternatives. We want to have whatever system is chosen operational by 2008, Shutters said. We talked about Ice Harbor RSW; construction is going well, and we anticipate that it will be installed prior to the start of the migration this spring. We discussed study design options; Tim Wick sent out an email laying out some of those options. Do we want to consider adding a BGS option to the Lower Granite summer test? Russ Kiefer asked. At the previous FFDRWG meeting, we discussed studies at Lower Granite, Shutters replied; that is one of the options we discussed, but there was concern about the BGS confounding the results for the RSW. We haven't really been considering the BGS option for the summer test, Shutters said. I just wanted to make sure everyone at SCT is comfortable with that decision, since this is the last year the Lower Granite BGS will be available, Kiefer said. After a brief discussion, the SCT agreed that the group has not yet made a final decision on whether or not the BGS should be tested during the summer in 2005.

Getting back to the Ice Harbor RSW test alternatives, Hevlin distributed copies of Wick's email; he noted that Wick has requested comments on these options. Hevlin suggested that the salmon managers get together and develop consensus comments; Ron Boyce replied that they plan to do so. Shuttters added that the researchers presented results from the 2004 RSW test at Lower Granite at the meeting.

Moving on, Shuttters said Lower Monumental RSW designs are proceeding; there will be a decision point this spring on whether or not construction should proceed. Parapet wall construction at Lower Monumental is proceeding, and will be complete this spring. We are also planning to schedule an agency trip to WES to evaluate the parapet well and outfall construction at Lower Monumental. The group also discussed Ice Harbor full-flow PIT detection, as well as Lower Monumental loading flume dewatering – that is scheduled to be completed this spring. The transition pool project will not go forward this year, although we do plan to complete the plans for that project, so it can be taken off the shelf at some future date. The only other thing we talked about was McNary forebay temperatures, Shuttters said; we saw a number of graphics from the CFD model at that project, and will start to discuss potential design and construction options to alleviate McNary temperature concerns soon. Lorz also raised the issue of a lamprey passage improvement project at McNary; it was agreed that the SCT will continue to discuss that project.

Shuttters said an agency trip to WES to discuss a number of research projects, including the Lower Monumental outfall modeling has been tentatively scheduled for February 7-18; all SCT members are invited to attend. The next Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting was set for February 2-3.

3. SRWG Update.

This topic was discussed during the previous agenda item.

4. Continued Discussion of FY'05 CRFM Budget and Program Measures.

John Kranda reported that, with the recent passage of the Congressional budget bill, the FY'05 CRFM appropriation was set at \$81 million. Savings and slippage is expected to reduce that amount by up to \$13 million, to \$68 million. We won't have a final number for another two or three weeks, he said; after savings and slippage are deducted, we may have as much as \$70 million-\$71 million to work with.

Kranda distributed copies of the most recent CRFM budget worksheet; the only change from last month is line-item 27, B2 corner collector follow-on, which increased from about \$300,000 to \$620,000. Kranda explained why the cost of this line-item has increased. The total cost of all of the prioritized line-items is just under \$71.8 million; with Corps add-ons, the total cost would increase to just under \$74 million. If savings and slippage turns out to be less than they were last year, we may be able to fit a significant number of these items in, Kranda said. At least two of those add-ons – the Lower Monumental parapet wall and TRT support – are already

committed and must be funded – as we heard earlier in the meeting, construction is already underway on the Lower Monumental parapet wall.

The SCT discussed the recent AFEP studies review, and its potential impact on the budget. Boyce noted that operational tests are needed to address powerhouse mortality issues at McNary; Shutters noted that this topic will be discussed at a special meeting on November 29 in Walla Walla. Shutters agreed to provide a new cost estimate for the McNary studies, as well as an estimate of the potential biological benefits associated with the McNary work in 2005. Hevlin noted, however, that one of the reasons for doing this test is to obtain such an estimate. Kim Fodrea replied that all BPA is seeking is a rough estimate – a range of potential benefits, similar to what was done for John Day in the past.

The group also discussed the delayed mortality study; Shutters noted that the funding for this study would be shared between CRFM and the Corps' O&M budget. We have that proposal, and we're not completely sure about it at this point, said Shutters. Kiefer said his understanding of the survival study results is that there isn't much difference between the transported and in-river fish, but in terms of SARs, the in-river fish do twice as well as the transported fish. My concern is that, by transporting a high percentage of the fish to below Bonneville, we may be shifting avian predation to the in-river fish, to the detriment of our overall SAR rates, Kiefer said. Idaho isn't going to be very supportive of research that will make transportation look better, but will reduce our overall SAR rates, Kiefer said. Shutters said it should be possible to add a design element to the avian predation study to get at the species composition of the fish the birds are eating. If your actions had no effect on the survival of in-river fish, then, yes, improving the survival of transported fish would be a good thing, Kiefer said. However, that doesn't appear to be the case. Idaho doesn't want any more money spent on this study until someone can convince us that our concerns are unfounded, said Kiefer.

The discussion then turned to the lamprey passage study; Lorz reiterated that the CRITFC commissioners would very much like to see that line-item (18) fully funded in FY'05. The group also discussed The Dalles spillway and sluiceway study; Peters noted that it may be necessary to add a High-Z-tag component to this study to get at the vortex issue, which would increase its cost. The relatively low survival through the Bonneville spillway in 2004 was also discussed; there was SCT consensus that some level of funding to repeat the Bonneville test is needed in 2005. Peters said he will develop a cost estimate for addition to the CRFM spreadsheet.

With respect to the Lower Granite summer test, Fodrea asked that the salmon managers develop as detailed a study design and biological rationale as possible. We will give you one or two options to look at, Kiefer replied. David Wills said his preference would be to conduct this year's test at Lower Granite with the BGS removed; that way, it would be possible to conduct a within-year comparison between RSW performance at Lower Granite and Ice Harbor. If we leave the BGS in during the summer test, he said, we would be committing the region to a summer test in 2006, so that we could compare results with the BGS in and with it out. Fodrea said BPA would prefer to conduct the 2005 test with the BGS out. The salmon managers provided Fodrea with a draft study design at today's meeting, noting that their final

recommendation may change somewhat. Wills asked Fodrea to give him a call if BPA has major concerns with this proposal.

The discussion then turned to the question of Little Goose vs. McNary as the next priority for RSW installation; Hevlin noted that the recent thinking in the region seems to favor McNary. Kiefer said the salmon managers had agreed that, to avoid a major argument, they were willing to accept the Corps' judgement as to whether Little Goose or Lower Monumental should be the next RSW priority, as long as it was understood that the salmon managers want RSWs installed at both projects as soon as possible. Our understanding was that the decision on what to do with surface bypass at McNary was somewhere down the road, once the region had the opportunity to evaluate all of the options at that project. Kiefer expressed surprise at seeing the Little Goose RSW line-item zeroed out, and at the Corps' apparent decision to pursue RSW construction at McNary before Little Goose. I'm not saying I couldn't be convinced that this is a good idea, he said, but I need to understand your rationale.

Shutters replied that the idea originated in the BiOp's measures for Upper Columbia stocks. It's a dilemma, said Hevlin; the Updated Proposed Action still says we will have RSWs in place at all four Lower Snake projects in time for the in-river survival study in 2007-'08. Peters explained that the Corps was concerned about the survival gap, referenced in the UPA, for non-Snake River listed stocks; the question we want to try to answer is, could we provide a greater overall benefit, more quickly, for more species, by getting surface bypass up and running at McNary and John Day, as an alternative to focusing exclusively on RSW construction at the Snake River projects. I wouldn't say the decision has been made yet, Peters said – I think we need to sit down in the Regional Forum process and hash it out.

Kranda added that the Corps' overall intent, given the limits of the annual CRFM budget, is to focus funds where they will provide the greatest biological benefit. My goal is to return the adult return rates of all of the species, Kiefer replied; my understanding is that one of the most important effects of the hydrosystem was slower travel times and delay at the dams. He noted that the first two-ocean Snake River spring chinook that passed Lower Granite via the RSW in 2002 have now returned; the results were very positive. I do have a Snake River bias, I admit that, Kiefer said. But I don't see as big an impact on anadromous fish from the hydrosystem in the Lower Columbia, he said. Peters noted that the Corps is also very concerned about Snake River and Mid-Columbia steelhead, particularly in the Lower Monumental-McNary reach. Research shows that surface bypass would yield a significant benefit for steelhead, said Peters, so that's one of our concerns. Kiefer noted that most juvenile Snake River steelhead are transported.

Won't the Snake River stocks still benefit, as they pass through RSWs at the Lower Columbia projects? Fodrea asked. Again, the information I've seen indicates that survival through the Lower Snake projects is more problematic than survival through McNary, for in-river fish, said Kiefer.

The discussion continued in this vein for some minutes. Ultimately, Hevlin observed that this decision doesn't need to be made today. The UPA and the 2004 BiOp are written with

sufficient flexibility to allow us to go in either direction – Little Goose first, or McNary first. It was agreed that a special meeting may be needed on this issue. Kiefer said he is willing to attend the January 12 McNary meeting in Portland and present his argument that the Lower Snake projects should receive RSWs before McNary, if that would be helpful. Peters asked that Kiefer provide him with any SAR information he may have on specific species.

5. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next System Configuration Team meeting was set for Thursday, December 16, again in the afternoon. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.